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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to describe and analyze the types of curricular and instructional approaches currently being used in adult literacy programs in New York City. A small representative sample of 16 programs and 48 staff members were selected for study. Information was gathered through onsite observation and interviews with 39 staff members. Results were reported in three areas--general program features, curricular practices, and instructional approaches. A primary finding of the study was the absence of a defined educational philosophy in the majority of adult literacy programs. Intended outcomes also varied by program and staff. The structural arrangements among the programs were found to be similar, and staff and students were more similar than different. The study found a noticeable discrepancy between the conceptual definitions of curriculum given by program staff and the actual descriptions they gave of their own curriculum. A curriculum resource center was reported to be a need of many of the staff. Teacher-made and published materials were the dominant resources, although a few used student-made materials; few used computers. The study recommended that the city's programs develop a clear philosophy, require more curriculum uniformity, establish a curriculum center, and refrain from presenting curriculum development workshops, which appeared to be of little value. (KC)

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STUDY OF ADULT LITERACY CURRICULA

Prepared by:
Susan Koen
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STUDY OF ADULT LITERACY CURRICULA

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1986

1985 was the beginning of a major expansion of literacy services in New York City. Literacy programs throughout the city offered instruction to almost twice as many students as in the previous year. As services were expanded, policymakers and literacy practitioners saw a need for more information on various aspects of literacy services: who is being served; who is providing the service; what types of instruction are being provided; and, more generally, what is known about the practice of adult literacy.

Comprehensive information about adult literacy programs is scarce and research is extremely limited. The Literacy Assistance Center (LAC) seeks to contribute to the literacy field by addressing long-standing questions and expanding the knowledge base.

The "Study of Adult Literacy Curricula" was undertaken to gain an initial understanding of the impact of the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative on instructional services. The study was conducted by Matrices Consultants Inc. and prepared by its director, Susan Koen, who has extensive experience in working with a wide range of literacy programs throughout the country. The study examines specific instructional/curricular approaches, differences between instructors' and program managers' definition of curriculum, and staff satisfaction with various instructional and curricular approaches. Conclusions, made on the basis of interviews with practitioners, indicate a need for the formation of a clear educational philosophy, and point the way to various kinds of technical assistance activities that would help program staff in the area of curricular development.

As one of three studies produced for the LAC in fiscal year 1986, Dr. Koen's study of curricula complements the work of Professor Gordon Darkenwald, a survey of current adult literacy research, and the work of Metis Associates Inc., a profile of personnel in New York City literacy programs.

Each study makes an important contribution to providing essential preliminary information needed to develop research priorities which will be of interest and relevance to the literacy community and advance the goal of increasing knowledge of the field of adult literacy.

Jacqueline Cook
Executive Director

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The MAC/AEA Adult Literacy Initiative has just completed its first year of operation. During this past year, the literacy programs and services in New York City have expanded severalfold. New programs have been developed, and existing programs have been greatly expanded. More adult students have been served than at any other time in this city's history. Such expansion clearly has enhanced the basic skills delivery system for illiterate adults. What has yet to be documented, however, is the effect of this sudden growth on the instructional services being delivered to adult students. Efforts are presently underway to collect student impact data from MAC/AEA adult literacy programs. At the same time, it is critical that steps to be taken to assess the nature and scope of instructional services being offered by these programs.

To gain an initial understanding of program instruction, the Literacy Assistance Center contracted with MATRICES Consultants, Inc. of Norwalk, Connecticut to conduct the Study of Adult Literacy Curricula. This study was designed to describe and analyze the types of curricular and instructional approaches curently being used in adult literacy programs in New York City. The specific goals of the study were:

- To define present curricular/instructional approaches in specific, operational terms
- To determine whether these curricular definitions vary between program managers and instructional staff

- To determine whether program staff are satisfied with their curricular and instructional approaches

Information derived from this study was to be used in planning staff development activities for the MAC/AEA system as well as future research projects on curricular/instructional practices in adult literacy programs.

Study Methodology

The Study of Adult Literacy Curricula was designed as a pilot research project for the Literacy Assistance Center. In this regard, the study involved only a small sample of MAC/AEA programs (N = 16). Moreover, this project used only one data collection strategy. The integrity and generalizability of the data were ensured, however, through rigorous sampling procedures and uniform data gathering techniques. The specific methodological procedures used in the curricular study are described in the remainder of this section:

Sample: MATRICES selected programs for this study using stratified, proportional sampling techniques. That is, complete lists of MAC/AEA programs were obtained for all three types of literacy programs -- Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), City University of New York (CUNY), and New York City Board of Education (BOE). The lists also were categorized according to the instructional focus of the program, namely Basic Education (BE) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Then, the proportional distribution of these programs was determined with the assistance of LAC staff. Along the variable of program type, the distribution in the sample pool was as follows: CBOs = 51%; CUNY = 17.5%;

and BOE = 31.5%. With regard to the variable of instructional focus, the program distribution was more equal, namely, 53% were BE programs and 47% were ESOL programs. These percentage distributions were used to determine the representation of programs in the final study sample.

Final sample selection was performed through randomized procedures. Each program was given a sample number; for convenience, the map code numbers assigned by Literacy Assistance Center were used for this sampling process. All programs within each program type, i.e. CBOs, CUNY and BOE, were grouped together to form a subsample pool. Then, every program within the three subsamples received a letter code for its instructional focus. Programs with both BE and ESOL components were treated as two separate programs for sampling purposes. Once code numbers were assigned, the final sample was selected using a Table of Random Numbers. The distribution of programs within the final sample is presented in Table 1 on the following page. As can be seen, the program sample for this study is representative of the adult literacy projects involved in the MAC/AEA Initiative in terms of both program type and instructional focus.

Another element in the sampling plan involved the selection of program staff to participate in this research project. In consultation with LAC staff, it was decided that the study would include one administrator and two teachers from each of the programs included in the final sample. The choice of participants to fill these two staff categories was given to

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL PROGRAM SAMPLE

Program Type	BE Programs N	BE Programs %	ESOL Programs N	ESOL Programs %	TOTAL Programs N	TOTAL Programs %
BOE	3	19%	2	12%	5	31%
CUNY	2	12%	1	7%	3	19%
CBOs	4	25%	4	25%	8	50%
TOTAL	9	56%	7	44%	16	100%

the programs themselves. Study designers felt that the type of information being collected and the experimental nature of the project warranted this self-selection strategy. Thus, the staff involved in the Study of Adult Literacy Curricula should be considered volunteer participants.

A breakdown of the final staff sample for the study is presented in Table 2 on the following page. Of the 48 staff who were selected for this research project, 39 of them (81%) actually participated in the data collection effort. The high rate of participation provides reasonable assurance that the data gathered through the curricular study is credible and also representative of the practices found in all MAC/AEA adult literacy programs.

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL STAFF SAMPLE

Type of Respondent	BOE		CUNY		CBOs	
	BE	ESOL	BE	ESOL	BE	ESOL
Directors	3	2	1	1	4	4
Teachers	5	4	3	2	7	3
Total Staff	8	6	4	3	11	7
Staff by Program Type	14		7		18	

Instruments and Procedures: Before gathering information for the study, it was necessary to construct a special data collection tool. MATRICES staff, therefore, designed a semi-structured interview protocol to assess the curricular and instructional practices evident in adult literacy programs. A copy of the protocol is provided in Appendix A of the report. This instrument included questions about general features of the programs as well as specific characteristics of their curriculum. The variables addressed in the interview protocol are as follows:

General Program Features

- Content Areas
- Instructional Setting
- Duration of Program Services
- Educational Philosophy
- Expected Benefits
- Student Characteristics
- Staffing Patterns

Specific Curricular/Instructional Features

- Instructional Materials
- Educational Technology
- Curriculum Design and Practices
- Theoretical Model for Instruction
- Directedness of Teaching/Learning Process
- Time-on-Task for Teachers and Students
- Learning Activities

In addition, the protocol covered some discrete factors within each of the variables listed. The study instrument, therefore, should be viewed as a comprehensive measure of the scope and depth of factors influencing curricular practices in New York City's adult literacy programs.

To collect the necessary data for the study, MATRICES conducted on-site interviews with selected program staff. Only one staff person from MATRICES was involved in data collection, ensuring the reliability of results across the different interviews. Credibility of the data were further enhanced by the skills of the interviewer; the MATRICES staff person collecting the data has a doctorate in applied psychological research as well as extensive experience in the field interview process.

The time interval for the on-site interviews averaged approximately two hours per program. Each participant was interviewed for about 45 minutes with some sessions lasting as long as one hour. All interviews were conducted during a three-week time span beginning in early June and concluding in the latter part of that month.

Data Analysis Procedures: Two different analysis techniques were used to analyze the data from the interview protocol. First, all structured items were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as sums, means (averages), ranges, and percents. Then, the open-ended items were examined through content analysis procedures wherein themes and patterns of information were identified. The structured and open-ended results also were analyzed for differences among types of respondents (administrators vs. instructors), types of programs (BOE vs. CUNY vs. CBOs), and instructional focus groups (BE vs. ESOL). In this way, it was possible to verify the information obtained from each program and to determine where curricular practices differed among literacy programs.

The information derived from this in-depth probe of curricular and instructional practices is presented in the remainder of the report. First, the study findings are presented in the Results section which follows. Then, the conclusions of the study and the suggestions for future action are presented in the final section of the report -- Implications/Recommendations. Together, these sections provide a clear picture of current adult literacy practices and areas for program development and improvement.

The major findings for the Study of Adult Literacy Curricula are organized according to three areas -- General Program Features, Curricular Practices, and Instructional Approaches. Within each of these areas, key questions are provided as a guide to the reader. The specific results of the study are detailed below.

General Program Features

What is the philosophical basis for instruction in adult literacy programs?

Choices regarding curriculum and instructional methods often are based on three theoretical factors -- the educational philosophy of a program, the content of instruction, and the intended outcomes for program participants. Curricular practices, in other words, are guided by how staff perceive the learning process, what they are trying to teach their students, and what staff believe are the ultimate goals of their programs. Thus, staff beliefs about the adult learning process can determine the specific teaching approach in an adult literacy program. Similarly, the impact that staff want to achieve with their students can direct the curriculum design for such programs. For these reasons, we were interested in assessing three philosophical elements of literacy programs, namely, the theoretical basis of instruction, the content areas addressed, and the expected benefits for program participants. The key findings from this inquiry are highlighted on the following page. In

addition, results related to the content areas and expected benefits of these programs are presented in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

- Few program staff in any of the programs surveyed were able to identify a specific educational philosophy underlying their program; when asked about their program or classroom philosophy, the vast majority (95%) of respondents listed program outcomes instead.

- Only four staff members (5%) indicated that a specific philosophical orientation formed the basis for their instruction; all of these were teachers. Of the four who named their educational philosophy, three identified the Frierian approach and one specified counseled learning as the theoretical basis for their classroom instruction. Two of the teachers purporting to use a Frierian model were from Basic Education programs, while the other one was an ESOL teacher; the person using counseled learning also was an ESOL teacher.

- Reading, writing, and listening/speaking were the major content for instruction in these adult programs (see Table 3). Few programs placed any emphasis on math as a primary area of instruction.

- Some content variations were evident across different types of programs and instructional groups. Board of Education programs tended to address all content areas with more frequency than either CUNY or CBO programs; similarly, most Basic Education programs (63%) covered a variety of instructional content while the majority (71%) of ESOL programs emphasized listening/speaking.

- Overall, staff viewed adult literacy programs as being beneficial to students in three ways: improving their academic skills, increasing their job success, and advancing their general life skills. Little emphasis was placed on increasing self-esteem or facilitating personal goal attainment.

- Teachers placed primary emphasis on skills development (22%) and educational advancement (22%) as intended outcomes of instruction; administrators, on the other hand, identified increases in job success (27%) as the major benefit of program participation.

The absence of a defined educational philosophy in the majority of adult literacy programs was a primary finding of this study. Such evidence

indicated that the literacy curricula currently in use is, by and large, void of a clear theoretical basis. Also of interest were the differences in intended outcomes reported by program administrators and instructional staff. Without agreement on what the program is trying to achieve, it would be difficult for staff to develop a curriculum or instructional approach to attain their desired results.

TABLE 3

CONTENT AREAS ADDRESSED IN ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS

Content Areas	Program Type			Instructional Focus	
	BOE	CUNY	CBOs	BE	ESOL
Reading	-	100%	63%	37%	57%
Writing	-	100%	63%	37%	57%
Listening/ Speaking	20%	50%	50%	13%	71%
Math	-	-	13%	13%	14%
All of the Above	80%	-	37%	63%	29%

TABLE 4

EXPECTED BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPANTS IN
ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS

Expected Benefits	Type of Respondent		
	Total	Administrators	Teachers
Improvement in academic skills	20%	19%	22%
Increase in job success	19%	27%	14%
Advancement of educational standing	17%	10%	22%
Improvement of general life skills	13%	10%	15%
Attainment of personal goals	12%	16%	9%
Increase in self-esteem	9%	6%	10%
Other	10%	12%	8%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

What structural arrangements characterize the adult literacy programs in New York City?

As with philosophical characteristics, structural arrangements can have a strong influence on the instructional process employed in an educational program. For this study, we were interested in two structural factors: a) the instructional setting or delivery mode; and b) the duration of the treatment cycle. The major results for these two areas are summarized below.

- All of the programs surveyed used classroom sessions as the primary setting for instruction. In addition, all of the CUNY programs and most of the CBO and BOE programs provided individual and/or group tutoring to augment their classroom-based instruction.

- A similar percentage (87%) of BE and ESOL programs reported that they use individual tutoring as a supplementary delivery mode; interestingly, however, more BE programs (87%) utilized group tutoring than did ESOL programs (71%).

- The yearly cycle for instruction within the city's adult literacy programs varied greatly across program type. Specifically, all of the programs provided by the Board of Education defined themselves as year-round programs, while only half of the CUNY programs and one-quarter of the CBOs seemed to provide such an extensive treatment cycle. The distribution among BE and ESOL programs was virtually even, with approximately half of each group offering year-round instruction.

- The adult literacy programs as a whole seemed to provide their instruction in accordance with the schedules of adult students. Just one program, a CBO offering Basic Education instruction, gave classes only during daytime hours; other programs provided classes either during the evening or on a day- and nighttime basis. The daily schedules were noticeably different between the two instructional groups. Most of the ESOL programs (86%) offered instruction during both day and evening sessions; the majority (50%) of the BE programs, on the other hand, provided classes only at night.

- On the average, literacy programs provide 2.75 to 3 hours of instruction during each class session. The average number of

sessions provided each week ranged from a low of 2 to a high of 4 meetings. Thus, students participating in these programs tended to receive an average of 9 hours of instruction per week. There were no noticeable variations in these figures across program types or instructional groups.

Based on these findings, it appeared that the structural arrangements within the city's adult literacy programs were fairly similar. Only the differences in yearly treatment cycles would create much variation in the programs' curricular practices.

To what extent do the adult literacy programs differ with regard to staff and students?

Obviously, an instructional program is influenced to a great degree by the characteristics of its staff and students. The number and type of teaching staff available within a program can affect the technical level of instruction offered by that program. Moreover, the types of students enrolled in a program can determine the nature of the curriculum and the instructional methods employed. For these reasons, staff and student characteristics were examined. The findings from this analysis are detailed below.

- On the average, these adult literacy programs employed five teachers, one teaching assistant and one other instructional support staff. CUNY programs seemed to have more teachers (N = 7) and teaching assistants (N = 2) than the other types of programs. Interestingly, the BOE programs had the fewest number of staff employed within an individual program.

- Staff size within the BE and ESOL programs was fairly similar. The only noticeable difference related to teaching assistants; on the average, BE programs had 2 assistants while ESOL programs did not employ anyone in this position.

- Few of the programs reported any appreciable number of volunteers being used for instructional purposes. The only variation from this pattern was found within the CUNY program offering ESOL instruction; here, there were five volunteers involved in instructional activities.

- The vast majority (73%) of programs included in this study were serving adult students of all ages. Only two CBO programs indicated their age criteria was limited; in both cases, the programs were serving students in the 18 - 25 age category.

- As with age, most (80%) of these programs enrolled students from a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds. Of the three CBO programs that served a specific population, two were designed for Hispanic students and one was focused toward Greek students.

- All but one of the programs indicated that they served students with varied reading abilities. One of the CUNY programs offering Basic Education instruction specified that it enrolled students at the 3.0 to 5.9 reading level.

- Other interesting characteristics related to students' sex and employment level. Three of the CBO programs (37%) indicated that they served primarily female students, and two CBOs (25%) specified that their student population was predominately unemployed. Otherwise, these adult programs enrolled students from both sexes and employment groups.

Again, there did not seem to be extreme variations among participating programs. One noticeable difference involved CUNY programs which tended to have more staff and more volunteers than the other programs. Additionally, some of the CBO programs differed with regard to their student population; a few served only younger students, while others served students from a particular racial/ethnic group, sex category or employment status. Overall, however, there was more similarity than difference among these literacy programs in terms of their staff and student characteristics.

Curricular Practices

What curricular practices are evident within adult literacy programs?

In seeking information about literacy curricula within the city's adult programs, there were several factors that we examined. First, we asked respondents to define the concept of "curriculum". Then, we asked them whether they used a specific curriculum within their own programs. Those that responded affirmatively also were asked to describe their curriculum. The findings from this inquiry are summarized in a narrative form below, and presented in Table 5 as well.

- Staff of adult literacy programs defined curriculum in several ways. The three primary descriptors were: a course of study (35%); a plan or guideline for knowledge acquisition (28%); and program goals and philosophy (24%). Performance objectives were given as a definition of curriculum by only a few staff members (9%).

- Definitions varied somewhat between program administrators and teachers. A substantial number (40%) of the administrators viewed curriculum primarily as a plan or guideline for knowledge acquisition, while only a few (19%) teachers defined curriculum this way. Interestingly, the same percentage (35%) of administrators and teachers defined curriculum as a course of study.

- Surprisingly, perhaps, an extremely high percentage of programs reported that they have a curriculum in place. In fact, of all staff interviewed, only two teachers in two different CUNY programs answered "No" when asked if their program had an existing curriculum. All administrators (100%) indicated that their programs have a curriculum in place.

- Staff responded to questions about their particular curriculum in a variety of ways. However, the majority of administrators and teachers combined (57%) described their curriculum as a list or booklet of skills. The other major descriptor used was performance objectives; 23% of the program managers and 11% of the instructional staff defined their curriculum in this way.

As these results indicate, there was a noticeable discrepancy between the conceptual definitions of curriculum given by program staff and the actual descriptions they gave of their own curriculum. The conceptual definitions tended to be somewhat general in nature, while their own curriculum seemed to be quite specific and skills-oriented.

TABLE 5

DESCRIPTORS OF CURRICULUM IN ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS

Curriculum Descriptors	Type of Respondent		
	Total	Administrators	Teachers
Skills lists/booklets	57%	46%	68%
Performance objectives	17%	23%	11%
Multi-level guide	9%	15%	4%
Published textbook	4%	4%	3%
Adapted curriculum	2%	4%	-
Isolated descriptors	11%	8%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%

How were these adult literacy curricula developed and how are they used?

In assessing curricular practices, it is not sufficient simply to know that a program has a curriculum. Rather, the methods of development and extent of usage offer critical insights regarding curricular practices in adult literacy programs. For this reason, the present study sought information relative to these factors. The results are presented below in a summary form.

- Overall, the most common curriculum development process involved a staff team who created the program's curriculum according to their own professional perspective about adult literacy. Both administrators and teachers agreed that this development process was the most common; it was used by 49% of the programs that specified their method of curriculum development.

- Other development methods reported by these programs were: curriculum based on students' requests or specific needs (19%); curriculum derived from other curriculum or texts (16%); and a scattering of other methods (16%) including curriculum suggested by the New York State Department of Education.

- Like the data on presence of curriculum, there was a very high percentage of repondents (95%) indicating that the program curriculum actually was used by instructional staff. Those not reporting curriculum usage were in CUNY or CBO prgrams; all BOE staff (100%) indicated that their program curriculum was in use.

- Interestingly, all (100%) of the ESOL teachers and administrators reported that the program curriculum was in use. In BE programs, there was a considerable discrepancy in the responses of program managers and teachers; all of the administrators (100%) indicated that the curriculum was used, while only three-quarters (76%) of the teachers reported such practice.

- Of the teachers who indicated that they used their program curriculum, all of them (100%) reported that the curriculum was helpful. Those that did not use their designated program curriculum did not seem to rely on any other literacy curriclum; rather, they seemed to provide instruction without any external guidelines to follow.

What assistance would be most useful in helping programs develop or refine their curriculum?

As a technical assistance organization, it is necessary for the Literacy Assistance Center to know how it can assist programs in refining their curricular practices. A critical question in this study, therefore, centered around the methods for future curriculum development in adult literacy programs. The answers to this assistance question are presented in tabular form on the following page. In addition, the major findings are presented below.

- The preferred methods of assistance reported by program staff were quite varied; over 15 different suggestions were offered. Among these, the primary form of assistance mentioned by staff (19%) was the availability of curriculum prototypes or examples.

- Other types of assistance that were mentioned with a high degree of frequency were more structural in nature. Several staff (14%) identified resources like money, computer hardware and improved facilities as needed forms of assistance. Similarly, several staff (14%) felt that more instructional materials were needed to improve their program curriculum.

- Interestingly, one of the assistance methods that was mentioned least frequently was workshops. Only one staff member (2%) felt that workshops were a valuable way of improving curricular practices.

- The variations in responses between administrators and teachers was quite revealing. For administrators, the two most helpful forms of assistance were curriculum prototypes (24%) and outside consultation (14%). Teachers, on the other hand, cited items such as instructional materials (26%) and concrete resources (20%) as the most desired assistance methods.

These findings lend support to LAC's efforts toward building a curriculum resource center. Clearly, program staff preferred a hands-on approach to assistance more than the traditional workshop format.

TABLE 6

PREFERRED METHODS OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR FUTURE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT/REFINEMENT

Methods of Assistance	Type of Respondent		
	Total	Administrators	Teachers
Curriculum prototypes	19%	24%	15%
Supplementary materials	14%	-	26%
Concrete resources	14%	6%	20%
Outside consultation	8%	14%	3%
Analysis of other programs	8%	10%	6%
Access to research on adult literacy	6%	-	12%
Information on tests or testing procedures	6%	10%	3%
More staff time	6%	10%	3%
Ideas	3%	-	6%
Workshops	2%	3%	-
Other isolated methods of assistance*	14%	23%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%

* The responses under "Other" include items such as assessment of teachers' skills, attention to general administrative procedures, and suggestions for enhancing computer literacy.

Instructional Approach

What types of instructional materials and technology are used in adult literacy programs?

Two key resources related to the curricular practices of adult programs are the instructional materials and edcuational technology used by teachers. Materials and technology serve as the structural channels for transmitting the curriculum. They, therefore, have a strong influence on a program's curricular practices. In the present study, these variables were examined in terms of the type and frequency of usage. Results of this analysis are summarized in the statements which follow.

- The three types of instructional materials used most frequently in all adult literacy programs are teacher-made materials, workbooks/worksheets, and published textbooks.
- Examining the materials usage across different types of programs revealed some slight variations; specifically, BOE and CBO programs most frequently reported use of teacher-made materials, while CUNY programs used workbooks/worksheets on a more frequent basis. In addition, CBO programs indicated a high usage of novels and short stories while BOE programs rarely used these materials.
- Interestingly, both Basic Education and ESOL programs indicated that teacher-made materials were used with the most frequency. Differences were noted in the extent of usage reported for workbooks/worksheets and published textbooks; BE programs used the former more often than ESOL programs, while the reverse was true for the latter type of materials.
- Over half (56%) of the adult literacy programs surveyed reported the use of educational technology to support their instructional delivery. Those indicating usage of technology specified that tape recorders and microcomputers were the most common types of equipment employed.

TABLE 7

TYPES OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS USED IN ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS

Materials Used	Program Type			Instructional Group	
	BOE	CUNY	CBOs	BE	ESOL
Teacher-Made Materials	79%	43%	61%	57%	75%
Workbooks/Worksheets	100%	57%	83%	78%	94%
Published Textbooks	79%	43%	61%	57%	75%
Novels/Short Stories	7%	29%	50%	39%	19%
Newspapers	0%	43%	17%	13%	19%
Student-Made Materials	0%	14%	6%	9%	0%
Brochures	7%	0%	6%	0%	13%
Dictionaries	7%	0%	6%	0%	13%
Forms/Applications	7%	0%	0%	0%	6%
Games	0%	0%	6%	4%	0%
Published Word Lists	0%	0%	6%	4%	0%
Other *	21%	29%	17%	17%	25%

* The primary materials included in this category are community information/newsletters, teaching kits, and pictures.

- Marked differences in technology usage were evident across program types. All CUNY programs (100%) indicated that they used educational technology, while only 50% of the CBO programs reported such practices; surprisingly, the least usage (38%) was reported by BOE programs.

- There also were variations in usage between the two instructional groups. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the ESOL programs reported the use of educational technology, while only half (50%) of the BE programs indicated usage of such equipment.

As with most educational programs, teacher-made and published materials were the dominant resources used by literacy staff. Of interest was the small percentage of usage reported for student-made materials. The adult education literature strongly suggests that learning be student-based, and yet these adult programs relied only minimally on students' work. Also worth noting was the low incidence of use for educational technology. Despite the influx of microcomputers into educational markets, most adult literacy programs have not availed themselves of this technology.

Did the instructional approach vary among adult education programs in New York City?

Examining the instructional practices of the city's literacy programs involved several questions regarding elements of program instruction. The first of these was a straightforward inquiry about the nature of the programs' instructional approach. Staff were asked to describe their approach and then select the best descriptors from a predetermined list. The results are presented in Table 8 and summarized below.

- Overall, the primary types of instructional approaches used in literacy programs were: comprehension-based (77%), conversational (69%), phonetic (62%) and writing-based (59%). The method used least often by all programs was the Frierian model.

- There were some variations in the approaches used by different types of programs. For instance, CBO and BOE programs most frequently used conversational methods of instruction, while CUNY programs rarely used this approach. Similarly, BOE and CUNY programs often utilized phonetic and structural analysis methods, while CBOs used such approaches less frequently.

- Even more noticeable differences were evident when the results were analyzed by instructional groups. The primary methods used by Basic Education programs were: comprehension-based (87%); conversational (70%); and structural analysis (57%). ESOL programs, on the other hand, most frequently used these instructional approaches: phonetic (81%); writing-based (69%); and conversational (69%).

By and large, the instructional methods used by adult literacy staff are focused on wholistic processes such as understanding what one is reading, engaging in dialogue, and writing. There were still some programs and staff who relied on incremental skills development as their primary approach to instruction. Most frequently, however, these skills-based methods were used to supplement the wholistic processes.

What practices characterize the teaching/learning process in the city's adult literacy programs?

To further understand the instructional practices used within adult programs, we analyzed the nature of the teaching/learning process. In

TABLE 8

TYPES OF INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH USED IN ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS

Instructional Approach	Program Type			Instructional Group	
	BOE	CUNY	CBOs	BE	ESOL
Comprehension-Based	86%	71%	72%	87%	63%
Conversational	86%	29%	78%	70%	69%
Phonetic	86%	57%	44%	48%	81%
Writing-Based	57%	43%	67%	52%	69%
Structural Analysis	71%	57%	39%	57%	50%
Experimental	57%	14%	44%	35%	56%
Counseled Learning	43%	14%	50%	26%	63%
Other *	21%	14%	33%	17%	44%

* The category "other" includes isolated responses such as role playing, student self-correction, eclectic linguistics and attitudes and biases intervention.

particular, we assessed three dimensions of this process: a) the primary director(s) of learning; b) the time-on-task for both teachers and students; and c) the types of instructional activities used. Results from this assessment are presented here in a summary form. In addition, data regarding the programs' instructional activities are presented in Table 9.

- The vast majority of administrators and teachers in a program surveyed indicated that they expect the teaching/learning process to be directed by teachers and students acting together. The group that was unanimous on this issue was CBO staff. Conversely, BOE administrators were less inclined toward the joint direction approach; many of them (40%) felt that teachers should direct the teaching/learning process.

- The data regarding hours per week that teachers work was more disparate then any information gathered in this study. In fact, there was no commonality in results reported by program type or type of respondent. According to administrators, teachers' work hours ranged from a low of six hours per week in CUNY programs to 32 hours in BOE programs. Teachers, on the other hand, reported that they worked an average of 16 hours in CUNY programs and 18 hours in BOE programs. CBO administrators and teachers reported average work time of 20 hours and 11 hours, respectively.

- The amount of work time allocated to instructional activities also varied across types of programs and staff. For example, CUNY directors indicated 100% of the teacher's time was spent in instruction, while teachers specified that only 63% of their time was allocated to instruction. Conversely, BOE administrators reported that teachers spent 40% of their work time on instructional activities, while the teachers themselves indicated that 85% of their time is allotted to instruction.

- Across all programs, both administrators and teachers reported that the most instructional time was spent on oral language development ($\bar{x}$ = 3.7 hours). The areas receiving the second highest amount of time-on-task was reading (3.4). Not surprisingly, ESOL programs emphasized time on oral language development, while BE programs attended to reading activities on a more frequent basis. Also, CUNY and BOE programs allocated more instructional time to oral language development than reading, while the converse was true for CBO programs.

TABLE 9

TYPES OF INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES USED IN ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS

Instructional Approach	Program Type			Instructional Group	
	BOE	CUNY	CBOs	BE	ESOL
Classroom Discussion	79%	100%	100%	95%	81%
Workbooks/Worksheets	86%	100%	100%	91%	88%
Writing/Composing	79%	100%	94%	77%	100%
Silent Reading	79%	86%	94%	82%	88%
Oral Reading	86%	86%	88%	82%	88%
Classroom Recitation	71%	57%	50%	32%	94%
Independent Projects	43%	86%	63%	50%	69%
Small Group Discussion	71%	71%	88%	73%	81%
Flash Cards	64%	43%	75%	45%	88%
Games	64%	14%	50%	41%	56%
Other *	36%	14%	56%	36%	44%

* The "other" category includes such activities as use of signs and symbols, computer-assisted instruction, field trips and peer assistance.

- The most common instructional activity found in these adult education programs was classroom discussion (89%); the two other learner activities reported most often were writing/composing (87%) and workbooks/Worksheets (87%). The least frequently used activity overall was games.

- Variations in the types of instructional activities were most noticeable between ESOL and BE programs. For example, many ESOL programs used classroom recitation (94%) and flash cards (88%), while few BE programs used these instructional strategies (32% and 45% respectively).

- Differences among program types were less pronounced. One obvious variation, however, was in the use of independent projects. A high percentage (86%) of the CUNY programs employed this strategy, while few BOE programs (43%) identified independent projects as a priamry learning activity.

In summary, the teaching/learning process can be characterized as a jointly directed effort in which classroom discussion and writing/composing constitute primary instructional activities. Overall, more time is being spent by teachers and students on oral language development than reading, especially in ESOL programs.

IMPLICATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The data gathered through the Study of Adult Literacy Curricula provide a rich base for future program planning and development. In addition, these results point to further areas of inquiry and exploration. We, therefore, have organized our specific suggestions into three categories -- Curriculum Development, Technical Assistance and Future Research. These study recommendations are presented below in list form.

Curriculum Development

1. The city's adult literacy programs should attend to the issue of educational philsophy. Clear decisions regarding the theoretical premises underlying adult instruction will facilitate the development and/or refinement of program curriculum.

2. Given the variations in curricular definitions and descriptions, programs would benefit from a city-wide review of curriculum by a panel of adult literacy professionals. This critique should not be aimed toward curricular uniformity, but rather toward curricular refinement. Therefore, the outcome of this review process should be specific suggestions for programs to use in developing or enhancing their curriculum.

Technical Assistance

1. By far, the most important effort the Literacy Assistance Center can undertake is the expansion of its curriculum resource center. If this center can provide varied and numerous examples of literacy curriculum and related materials, it will serve the needs of program staff.

2. LAC staff should refrain from presenting curriculum development workshops, as these technical assistance activities seem to be of little value to program staff. Any curricular workshops that are provided should be based on specific client requests.

Future Research

1. Some of the discrepancies in study findings point to the need for continued inquiry regarding curricular and instructional practices. In particular, studies should be conducted through more direct means of assessment such as observation and document review. These procedures can be used to verify the self-reports that formed the present study.

2. Research Studies also should be conducted which link curricular practices directly to student outcomes. Comparative analyses across different types of curriculum can provide useful feedback to programs engaged in curriculum development and refinement. Moreover, these studies would contribute to the general knowledge base regarding adult literacy programs.

The Study of Adult Literacy Curricula serves as a beginning step in the effort to understanding curricular and instructional practices in adult literacy programs. If action is taken as suggested, these practices will be understood even more clearly in the future. Moreover, program curricula and instructional activities will be even more effective in raising the literacy level of New York City's adult population.

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

MATRICES
CONSULTANTS INC
4 Eversley Ave Norwalk, CT 06851 203/853-4163

LAC STUDY OF ADULT LITERACY CURRICULA
Interview Protocol

Program Name:_____ Component:_____

Respondent:_____ Interviewer:_____

Position:_____ Date:_____

Section I — GENERAL PROGRAM FEATURES

1. Who is the target audience for this BE/ESOL program?

   Age Range:_____ Reading Level:_____

   Ethnic Breakdown:_____

   Other Characteristics:_____

2. What is the content focus of this BE/ESOL program? [Check all that apply]

   _____Reading _____Listening/Speaking _____Other [Specify]

   _____Writing _____Math _____All of Above

   What is the content focus of your BE/ESOL classroom? [FOR TEACHERS ONLY]

   _____Reading _____Listening/Speaking _____Other [Specify]

   _____Writing _____Math _____All of Above

3. What type of instructional structure(s) do you use in your program? [Check all that apply]

   _____Classroom Sessions

   _____Individual Tutoring Sessions

   _____Group Tutoring Sessions

4. How frequently do you offer your BE/ESOL instructional program?

   a. Time of year: _____

   b. Time of Day: _____

   c. Length of Session: _____

   d. Hours per Week: _____

   e. Session per Week: _____

5. How many instructional staff do you have in your BE/ESOL program and what are their positions?

   a. Paid Staff: _____

   _____

   b. Volunteers: _____

6. What is the educational philosophy [or theoretical basis] of this BE/ESOL program?

   What is the educational philosophy [or theoretical basis] of your BE/ESOL classroom? [FOR TEACHERS ONLY]

7. What are the expected benefits [or intended outcomes] for participants in this BE/ESOL program?

   What are the expected benefits [or intended outcomes] for participants in your BE/ESOL classroom? [FOR TEACHERS ONLY]

Section II -- INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

1. What types of instructional materials are used in your BE/ESOL program or classroom? [USE HANDOUT SHEET]

_____Published Textbooks
_____Novels or Short Stories
_____Newspapers
_____Magazines
_____Teacher-Made materials
_____Student-Made materials
_____Workbooks/Worksheets
_____Published Word Lists
_____Brochures
_____Manuals
_____Dictionaries
_____Games
_____Forms or Applications
_____Other [Specify]

2. Which types of instructional materials are used most frequently in your BE/ESOL program or classroom in order of priority? [Please list top 3 only]

a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

3. Do you use educational technology or instructional equipment in your BE/ESOL program or classroom?

_____YES _____NO

If so, please indicate what type(s) of equipment is used? [Check all that apply]

_____Microcomputers
_____Typewriters or typing stations
_____Tape Recorders
_____Videotape machines
_____Other [Specify] _____

4. How many hours does the average student use this equipment during a typical week? [Indicate hours for each type of equipment separately]

Hours	Type of Equipment
_____	Microcomputers
_____	Typewriters or Typing Stations
_____	Tape Recorders
_____	Videotape Machines
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	TOTAL HOURS

5. Can you describe how this equipment is used by a typical teacher and student?

Teacher Use:

Student Use:

Section III -- CURRICULUM

1. How would your define the term "curriculum"?

2. Is there a curriculum for this BE/ESOL program?

_____YES _____NO

If YES, would your describe the curriculum? [IF COPY IS AVAILABLE, PLEASE ATTACH]

3. How was this curriculum developed?

4. Is the curriculum currently being used in your BE/ESOL program or classroom?

FOR TEACHERS

5. Is this curriculum helpful to you?

_____YES _____NO

If YES, explain how it is helpful.

If NO, do you use another curriculum? [Elaborate as asked above in #5]

FOR MANAGERS AND TEACHERS

6. What would be useful to you in curriculum development?

Section IV — INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Please describe what happens during a typical classroom/tutoring session? [Obtain as much detail as possible]

Is this scenario similar for other teachers or is it unique to your classroom/tutoring session? [FOR TEACHERS ONLY]

2. How would you describe the instructional approach used in your BE/ESOL program or classroom?

Would you characterize your instructional approach in any of these ways? [USE HANDOUT SHEET/ASK ONLY IF NOT SPECIFIED]

_____Phonetic

_____Experimental

_____Structural analysis

_____Comprehension-based

_____Other [Specify]_____

_____Frierian model

_____Counseled learning

_____Writing-based

_____Conversational

Is the same approach used by other teachers or is your approach unique? [FOR TEACHERS ONLY]

3. Who is expected to direct the teaching/learning process -- teachers, students or both together?

_____Students

_____Teachers/Tutors

_____Both [Indicate % of each]

4. What is the total amount of time [in hours] that teachers/you work during a typical week?

_____TOTAL HOURS

5. How many hours are spent by teachers on direct instructional activities during a typical week of instruction? How many hours on administrative activities? [Indicate answer in hours]

_____Instructional Hours

_____Administrative Hours

_____Other Hours [Calculate]

6. How much time [in hours] is spent "on task" by a full-time teacher in each of the following subject areas? [Provide answers for a typical week of instruction] [NOTE: TOTAL HOURS should equal hours in 5a above]

_____Reading Activities

_____Writing Activities

_____Oral Language Development

_____Math Activities

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____TOTAL HOURS

7. How much time [in hours] is spent "on task" by a typical student in each of the following subject areas? [Provide answers for a typical week of instruction]

_____Reading Activities

_____Writing Activities

_____Oral Language Development

_____Math Activities

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____TOTAL HOURS

8. What types of learner activities are used in your program/classroom? [USE HANDOUT SHEET]

_____Silent Reading

_____Oral Reading

_____Classroom Recitation

_____Independent Projects

_____Worksheets/Workbooks

_____Other [Specify] _____

_____Classroom Discussion

_____Small Group Discussion

_____Writing/Composing

_____Flash Cards

_____Games

9. Which activities are used most frequently? [Please list top 3 only]

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____